

January 2017

This statement is released on behalf of: ASSVAP, IAAT, IRVAP and NAVP

STATEMENT ON RAMP FROM INDUSTRY STAKEHOLDERS

All associations that constitute the veterinary / animal physiotherapy working group* welcome regulation of practitioners in the animal musculoskeletal sector to ensure that the professionals working within the industry are competent, educated to the appropriate level and adequately insured. The veterinary / animal physiotherapy working group as a whole are working hard to foster a collaborative approach within the industry in order to ensure that animals and their owners get the highest standards of care available. Animal welfare is paramount.

Legal Framework for Animal Musculoskeletal Practitioners

Animal musculoskeletal practitioners include animal hydrotherapists, animal/veterinary physiotherapists, animal chiropractors, animal osteopaths and animal massage therapists.

The industry is not currently independently regulated. For example, there is no legal requirement for anyone to hold any qualification in order to call themselves an animal/veterinary physiotherapist. This is the impetus behind the steps being taken by appropriately qualified, competent and insured practitioners to try to establish a regulatory framework in order to protect members of the public and their animals from incompetent and uninsured practitioners.

There is no legal requirement for anyone to be human trained before working with animals. Many people choose to undertake an animal first route to qualification, such as an undergraduate degree or post graduate qualification in veterinary physiotherapy. A human trained practitioner can pursue a postgraduate qualification in veterinary physiotherapy in order to work with animals.

However, there is a legal requirement that all those who offer animal musculoskeletal treatment only treat an animal following a referral from a veterinary surgeon. In practice members of the public are protected by competent practitioners being qualified to an accepted academic and practical level, being members of a credible professional association with an elected board, robust code of conduct and disciplinary procedure and eligibility requirements which include a minimum standard of training, assessment of day one competencies, a defined scope of practice and stringent annual requirements for professional development.

Register of Animal Musculoskeletal Practitioners (RAMP)

In light of the press articles and media coverage of RAMP in a number of industry publications a number of associations within the veterinary / animal physiotherapy working group thought it would be helpful to provide the following information to the public and veterinary profession on the register and its membership.

If the animal musculoskeletal practitioner that currently treats my pet is not listed on RAMP does this automatically mean they are not appropriately qualified or insured?

No, not at all. Firstly, the register is a voluntary register and there is no regulatory or legal requirement for any practitioner to join the register. Secondly, those practitioners who are appropriately qualified, for example having completed a BSc. honours in veterinary physiotherapy or a postgraduate qualification in veterinary physiotherapy involving clinical placements and competency based assessments, are currently unable to join the register as the three associations responsible for the implementation of RAMP have chosen to make it live only for clinicians with a human background. Therefore a practitioner could be appropriately qualified, competent and insured and yet be unable to join the register as they undertook an animal first qualification rather than first being human trained. *You should however always ask any practitioner for details of their qualifications and insurance cover.*

Why are non-human qualified practitioners not included on RAMP?

The Association of Chartered Physiotherapists in Animal Therapy (ACPAT), one of the three associations responsible for the implementation of RAMP, has indicated that RAMP will be open

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to applications from non-human trained practitioners from later this year. Unfortunately it is not clear from the information within the public domain why the register has not been made inclusive of appropriately qualified, insured, non-human trained practitioners from its inception.

Is RAMP compulsory?

No, the register is a voluntary register. There is no regulatory or legal requirement for a practitioner to be listed on the RAMP register.

Is RAMP a regulator of the animal musculoskeletal industry?

No, Ramp has no regulatory powers.

Is RAMP an initiative led by DEFRA?

No, RAMP is not an initiative that is led by DEFRA.

Does this mean a veterinary surgeon can only refer an animal to someone listed on RAMP?

No, a veterinary surgeon can refer an animal for treatment to any competent & insured practitioner irrespective of whether or not they are listed on RAMP. Indeed many veterinary surgeons have longstanding relationships with competent, qualified and insured practitioners who cannot be listed on RAMP and there is no reason why these relationships cannot continue.

Will insurance companies pay for treatment carried out by a practitioner that is not listed on RAMP?

Yes, as long as treatment is carried out pursuant to a veterinary referral and your policy provides cover for treatment.

What's the future for the regulation of animal musculoskeletal practitioners?

The veterinary / animal physiotherapy working group welcomes regulation and the associations issuing this information wish to see a competency based approach to regulation to ensure that from day one practitioners are sufficiently equipped to provide the absolute best and most effective treatment for the animals that they treat.

DEFRA led a project that was entitled the "Review of Minor Procedures Regime" which concluded in March 2015. Musculoskeletal treatment of animals formed part of the review and it was hoped by those working within the industry that the project would result in DEFRA implementing a regulatory framework for the industry. However DEFRA chose three "procedures" as pilot projects and MSK treatment was not one of the procedures that was selected.

At present any regulation will therefore be industry led. An all-inclusive register of competent MSK professionals to include both human and non-human trained practitioners may be the future and although RAMP is certainly a move in the right direction, in its current form it does not represent the industry as a whole. RAMP is likely to be just one of several initiatives implemented by those associations working within the industry over the coming months and years.

*The veterinary / animal physiotherapy working group consists of the following associations: ASSVAP, IAAT, IRVAP, NAVP and education providers CEPT, Harper Adams University, Justo Development Ltd and The College of Animal Physiotherapy